DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 419 JC 850 195

AUTHOR Klink, William
TITLE Merit Pay and Developmental Composition.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; Evaluation Methods; *Financial Support; *Merit Pay; Postsecondary Education; *Program Costs; *Remedial Instruction; *Teacher Evaluation; *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

Five areas are considered with respect to the relationship of merit pay and developmental composition: (1) the kinds of merit pay; (2) the sources of merit pay funds; (3) the combinations of developmental writing programs, types of merit pay, and the sources of funding; (4) the evaluation of teachers for the purposes of merit pay; and (5) the impact of merit pay on developmental composition. First, six distinct types of merit pay are identified, and the problems associated with all of these types are reviewed. Next, the four sources of funding are examined (i.e., federal, state, local, and private) and associated with different types of merit pay proposals and different kinds of developmental writing programs. Next, arguing that the most difficult issue to deal with in any merit pay program is the evaluation process, the paper suggests nine elements for evaluating a developmental writing class. The immediate positive and negative effects of the application of merit pay to developmental writing are then identified, and an illustration of a plan for the implementation of merit pay in a developmental writing course for a typical English Department is provided. The illustration highlights that a simple merit pay system can be set up with modest funding, but that high intangible costs may be incurred to the department and school. (AYC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED256419

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. Klink

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

MERIT PAY AND THE TEACHING OF DEVELOPMENTAL COMPOSITION

JC 850 195

William Klink
English Professor
Charles County Community College

Merit Pay and Developmental Composition

The politics of merit pay is a strong force in secondary education today, leading to a general re-thinking of the ways to ensure that teachers become as effective as possible with their students. Much has been said about merit pay from President Reagan down through state and local school boards to the level of the average taxpayer. Everyone agrees that it is not a cure-all, but many seem to think that some sort of merit pay would be an important improvement in the system. A Newsweek poll of June 27,1983, showed 89% approving of requiring more English,mathematics and science to be taught in public schools; 80% approving of basing teachers' salaries on merit to attract and retain better public school teachers; 90% apoproving of competency testing for teachers.

Colleges are generally not seen as part of the discussion because promotional criteria of instructors is itself a stucture of merit pay. However, the teaching of developmental composition in many colleges is done by the lowest level of rank, and many instructors are without tenure track status, and so have no hope of meriting promotion.

Many of these instructors are like high school teachers in that they earn only "automatic" step increases plus some cost of living adjustment and have little or no hope of moving up a career ladder. Further, they are teaching essentially a level of subject matter similar to that of their secondary school colleagues.

It seems logical that schools, teachers, and students, whether representative of secondary schools or institutions of higher learning, would benefit from improved instruction in developmental composition. One of the ways to improve it may be by using a merit pay system.

To my knowledge, merit pay and developmental composition is a topic that has not been addressed, if thought of at all. It is, however, a complex conception, confusing in many ways. In my view there are five areas of consideration:

1. The kinds of merit pay
2. The sources of merit pay funds
3. The combinations of developmental writing programs, types of merit pay and the sources of funding
4. The evaluation of teachers for purposes of merit pay
5. The impact of merit pay on developmental composition.

The question of what constitutes merit pay is a nagging one. I see merit pay divided into six distinct types, some of which, in practice, can overlap. For the sake of clarity, I will define them separately.

1. Incentive pay rewards teachers for the difficult conditions under which they teach. The purpose of incentive pay is to change the supply and turnover and distribution of teachers in subject areas and locales. Research shows that incentive pay

...s worked, encouraging teachers to work in areas of shortage. On the other hand, it violates the seemingly socially desirable principle of equal pay for equal responsibility.

2. Master Teacher programs address the equal pay for equal responsibility principle by providing differentiated pay scales for differentiated responsibilities. Currently this is the most popular of the merit pay proposals for that reason. A master teacher program can be set up on any jurisdictional level: school district, statewide, or probably nationally. It is analogous to higher education's faculty rank scheme. Typically there are limits placed on the number of teachers who earn increased salary and responsibility categories. Participation, moving up the ladder of categories, is based on a teacher's willingness to participate and based on performance. The concept is based on the belief that teaching performance can be measured and that student performance can be raised by having "master teachers" evaluate and assist other teachers.

3. Pay for performance is a system by which a teacher receives additional money based on an evaluation of his duties. The premise is that pay incentives improve classroom instruction.

4. Excellence awards reward individual teachers for their achievements. These awards are limited in number and can come from outside the system, from a service organization or from a corporate body 5. Professional Enhancement plans give teachers awards which are applicable to improving their performance; awards such as fellowships for summer study and sabbaticals seek to plow back the merit pay into the instructional system.

6. Dual pay schedules offer a double track system, divided between those who seek merit pay for greater performance and those not seeking it. Dual pay encourages teachers to make extra effort to do a better than average job.

Objections to all of these can be summarized in four points:

1. the greatest need is to raise the base salary of all teachers.

2. merit pay provides salary increases to a minority of teachers and is rather a way for the jurisdiction to save money.

3. merit pay encourages elitism which was deliberately remediated in the past by salary scales. We should not forget that their was a time when high school teachers were paid more than elementary school teachers and men more than women.

4. merit pay systems can not be effectively designed and implemented even if teachers have a role in the design and implementation.

Even if these objections could be overcome, funding sources for each of the types of merit pay programs must be identified and used to support the program. I see four sources

of funding:
1. Federal
2. State
3. Local
4. Private

Federal- There is little agreement about the appropriate federal role in merit pay, mostly because of the traditional view that state and local governments appropriately control education. Even in the 60s and 70s when the federal government was giving vast amounts of funds to schools, little federal follow-up or enforcement was present because of this traditional notion. In fact, according to Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Commission, whose recent book deals with this area of concern, the states and localities require now a greater accountability of their funds than the federal government ever has. If, however, there is a consensus that non-traditional responses are necessary to a national crisis in education, the federal role can expand. Currently in place because it is thought to be in the national interest are technology grants from the Department of Education encouraging technology use and know-how in the schools. A similar response may be found in the future in other areas besides technology, such as developmental composition. The federal legislature proposed the Excellence in Education Act, sponsored by Senator John Heinz and Representative William Goodling. While not curriculum-specific, it could become so before passage or be interpreted that way at the local level and therefore be relevant to the instruction of writing.

Furthermore, the Reagan Administration encourages private sector involvement in education with its Partnerships In Education program. It is a means of bringing together schools, agencies and business for the improvement of classroom education.

State- California, Arkansas, Tennessee and Virginia are leaders among the states in setting up state controled or entrusted merit pay programs. Florida, specifically, has a program in the making which would have an impact on the teaching of writing. It proposes that a Quality Instructional Incentives Council is to set up a master teacher program, develop subject area certification tests for the teachers, and a literacy test requirement for graduation by the students. In Virginia, the Governor's Special Advisory Committee for Quality Education recommended a career ladder, master teacher plan, and a plan for pay for performance. Meanwhile, the Virginia State Board of Education wants to establish learning objectives in each subject area at each grade level, with assessment of achievement. If these initiatives move forward, there might be, in effect, merit pay for developmental composition in Virginia public schools.

While these are just a few examples, it appears that state after state is turning to some form of merit pay in an effort.

to improve education achievement within its borders. In the current climate, there is reason to think that state pressures for changes to merit pay systems will continue. Maryland and other states currently considering initiatives for change are sure to be not far behind.

Private- Little mention of private funding for merit pay occurs because schools are typically government sponsored, with the exception of private schools. Nevertheless, business and industry use schools for training their employees. Frequently they pay toward special programs; one such, of course, could be a curriculum a part of which is a writing program. Phone companies and certain multi-national corporations have set up foundations to encourage educational projects. Their contributions, though they will never be broadly applied, could benefit an entire school system or an individual school or campus. Apple Computer intends to give computers to schools, figuring that students will later buy Apple computers and Apple will sell the ancillary services and software. Arrangements of this sort, whether ethical or not, can be seen as sources of merit pay for teachers, either directly or indirectly. How murky this area of enterprise can be is indicated by the Congressional response to the National Education Association's sponsorship of software sold to schools. There was a House of Representatives amendment to a vocational education re-authorization bill to prohibit the use of NEA-type computer software arrangements.

Leaving such objections aside, since computers can be used to teach developmental writing, isn't it conceivable that Apple could set up a merit pay system for teachers of writing using their products? And this is not so far fetched either. After all, IBM already endows professorships at universities, hoping to gain from the research into hardware and software that results from these professorships.

Clearly there is much thought still to be put forth to clarify or even to discover some of the ramifications of establishing merit pay systems of all sorts. It is possible, however,to create a matrix of all the issues covered thus far to give a view of the applicability of the different kinds of merit pay proposals, different sources of funding, and the different kinds of developmental writing programs

Bearing in mind that developmental writing programs vary in depth, objectives, indeed by all parameters, the following chart is meant to highlight some of the more provocative possibilities.

	Defined Program	Discrete Course	Part of a Lit Course
Incentive Pay	State Fed Local Pri	State Local Pri	Fed
Master Teacher	State Local	Fed State	Local
Pay for Performance	Local Pri	Local Pri	Local
Excellence Awards	Fed Local Pri	Fed Local Pri	Local
Professional Enhancement Awards	Fed Local Pri	Fed Local Pri	Local
Dual Pay Schedules	Local	Local	Local

Rather than looking at every cell on the chart, a look at just a few shows some of the implications that establishing a merit pay program has on the teaching of developmental writing. For example, if there is a shortage of developmental writing teachers, as there is of math instructors, incentive pay to attract and retain them could come from federal, state and private sources whether the teacher were teaching developmental writing in a defined program,in a discrete course, or even as part of a literature course.

Of greater interest, however, are those areas of the chart encompassing Pay for Performance down through Professional Enhancement Awards and under the heading of Defined Program and Discrete Course. These are areas of greatest interest because, on the one hand, they are the most organized educationally and, on the other, their source of funding is the most diverse, the most flexible, and most importantly, the closest to the classroom and the easiest for evaluation.

How then can Pay for Performance, Excellence Awards, and Professional Enhancement Awards be integrated into the teaching of developmental writing? As with any other merit pay program the most difficult issue to deal with is the evaluation process. The rest is fairly simple.

Who designs the evaluation system, its elements, who would do the actual evaluation, and who would supervise and have final authority for the evaluation? These are the main issues. Identifying, weighing, and ranking teaching tasks and factors and determining the proportion of the teacher's salary that is to be allocated are all major components of a merit pay scheme. A successful program is one with all parties involved agreeing in all aspects:administrators, teachers, students, and parents, and taxpayers.

Most specifically,what would be the elements of evaluation of a developmental writing class? I propose that they might include the following items:

1.Students' knowledge of grammar based on standardized test scores compared to a norm or objective
2. Group-graded essays compared to a norm or objective
3. Standardized tests of the teachers
4. Quantity of work done by students
5. Pre- and post-test score differentials of student knowledge
6. Peer evaluation of classroom performance
7. Administrative evaluation of classroom performance
8. Subsequent course performance of students measured against an established norm or objective
9. Self-evaluation

Administrative and faculty personnel should jointly

determine the weight that each of these items has in the evaluation and rank the performance of the faculty accordingly. Pay for Performance, Excellence Awards, and Professional Enhancement Awards should be granted to those achieving the highest total evaluation.

Merit pay when applied to developmental writing will have immediate effects, some good, some not too good:

1. More research on testing, objectives, etc.
2. Better use of classroom time
3. Fuller use of the school year
4. Early exit for students completing objectives
5. Increased individual attention to students
6. Closer working relationship between members of the composition community, colleges and secondary schools
7. Greater knowledge of student body's strengths and weaknesses
8. More active involvement of students faculty and administrators
9. Clearer understanding of developmental composition
10. Increased teacher morale for competing winners
11. Lower future costs to the Nation
12. Increased literacy and greater writing ability
13. Pressure on teachers
14. Pressure on students
15. Elitist behaviors among parents, students, and faculty and administrators
16. Imposition of additional time- consuming duties on all involved
17. Decreased morale for competing losers

Be these effects what they may, I believe that merit pay in a developmental writing course for a typical English Department can be easily established with only modest funding. The following is a plan for a typical semester at a medium sized school:

Number of Faculty: 5 full time
Number teaching
D.C.: 2 teaching 2 sections 1 teaching 1 section with word processors
Number of Faculty: 30
part time 3 teaching 1 section

Texts: English 2600, Blumenthal
Sentence Combining, Strong

Types of Merit Pay and Sources of Funding:

1. Incentive pay for the word processing instructor paid for by Apple Computer wholesaler; amount $1000
2. Pay for Performance to the one instructor with the best student outcomes, in an amount equalling 10% of the highest paid faculty member's salary, pro rata, per section: $35,000/10 sections=$350; paid for by institutional funds

3. Professional Enhancement Award to the teacher newest to the course, desiring to continue in the field, with the highest performance rating; amount; $300 tuition for summer writing workshop; paid for out of faculty development funds.
Criteria for Pay for Performance and Professional Enhancement Awards:
1. 95 percentile score on ETS Test of Standard Written English by the instructor
2. percentage gain score average on pre-test and final test in English 2600
3. percentage of students completing Sentence Combining
4. Group-graded, holistically scored, randomly selected student essays (percentile based scoring)

Evaluation: Eligibility determined by satisfying criterion #1. Criteria 2, 3, and 4, are averaged for total percentile score

Total Cost: $1,000 from Apple Computer wholesaler
$650 from the institution

Number of Awardees: 3
Number of Non-Awardees: 32

The expectation would be that even with modest funding, a simple merit pay system can be set up. It would be one which might improve the instruction of developmental composition. And there will be real pressures to achieve that goal built into the scheme. As the example shows, a great many teachers willl get nothing from the program at all. That will probably lead to some broad dissatisfaction, even if all other outcomes go according to form. One must think that this program, then has a high intangible cost to the department and to the school. There will ten times as many dissatisfied teachers as there will be satisfied teachers, potentially.

Despite its drawbacks, merit pay has the politics of the moment on its side. Now is the time to test the idea in schools and on campuses. Merit pay may well provide the stimulation for teachers to stem the rising tide of mediocrity noted in our nation's schools. And it may well improve student writing in developmental composition courses. But we must remember that at the same time there will probably be unwanted pressures on students, faculty and on the schools themselves, even if it succeeds in raising writing levels.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
JUN 28 1985